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JAN 12 2007

REMARKS

Claims 1-4, 7, 9-16, 20, and 29-32 are pending in the present application. Claims 1-4, 7, 9, 11, 15, and 29 have been amended hereby, and claims 8, 17-19, and 25-28 have been cancelled, without prejudice or disclaimer. It is respectfully submitted that no new matter has been added by the present amendment.

The undersigned would like to thank the Examiner for his time and assistance during the telephone conferences of January 9, 2007 and January 11, 2007.

Allowable Subject Matter

Applicants acknowledge the indication in the Office Action that claims 8-14, 17, and 18 were objected to as being dependent upon a rejected base claim, but would be allowable if rewritten in independent form including all of the limitations of the base claim and any intervening claims.

By the present amendment, the elements of claims 8-14 indicated as allowable by the Office Action have been incorporated into amended independent claim 1. The elements of claims 17-18 indicated as allowable by the Office Action have been incorporated into amended independent claim 15.

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Rejections under 35 U.S.C. § 112

Claim 29 was rejected under 35 U.S.C. § 112, second paragraph, as allegedly being indefinite for failing to particularly point out and distinctly claim the subject matter which Applicant regards as the invention due to its dependency from previously-cancelled claim 5.

It is respectfully submitted that claim 29 has been amended hereby. Withdrawal of the rejection under 35 U.S.C. § 112, second paragraph, is respectfully requested.

Rejections under 35 U.S.C. §§ 102(b) and 103(a)

Claims 1-2, 4, 7, 15-16, 19-20, 25-28, and 30-32 were rejected under 35 U.S.C. § 102(b) as allegedly being anticipated by U.S. Patent No. 5,371,993 to Saito (hereinafter "Saito"). Claim 3 was rejected under 35 U.S.C. § 103(a) as being allegedly unpatentable over Saito in view of Japanese patent document JP 4-213668.

Regarding claims 19 and 25-28, as indicated above, claims 19 and 25-28 have been cancelled hereby, without prejudice or disclaimer.

Regarding claims 1-2, 4, and 7, the elements of claims 8-14 indicated as allowable by the Office Action have been incorporated into independent claim 1. Accordingly, amended

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independent claim 1 is believed to be allowable over Saito. Claims 2, 4, 7, 9-14, and 29 depend from amended independent claim 1, and are therefore also believed to be patentable over Saito at least due to their dependency from a patentable independent claim. Claim 3 also depends from amended independent claim 1, and is believed to be patentable over Saito in view of JP 4-213668 for at least similar reasons.

Regarding claims 15-16 and 30, the elements of claims 17-18 indicated as allowable by the Office Action have been incorporated into independent claim 15. Accordingly, amended independent claim 15 is believed to be allowable over Saito. Claims 16 and 30 depend from amended independent claim 15, and are therefore also believed to be patentable over Saito at least due to their dependency from a patentable independent claim.

Further, independent claim 20 is believed to be allowable as discussed with the Examiner during the telephone conference of January 11, 2007 for similar reasons that amended independent claim 1 has been deemed allowable. Claims 31-32 depend from independent claim 20, and are therefore also believed to be patentable over Saito at least due to their dependency from a patentable independent claim.

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Withdrawal of the rejections under 35 U.S.C. § 102(b) and 35 U.S.C. § 103(a) is respectfully requested.

This communication is believed to be fully responsive to the Office Action, and the present application is believed to now be in condition for allowance.

If an additional telephone interview would be of assistance in advancing prosecution of the subject application, the Examiner is respectfully invited to contact the undersigned at the number provided below.

If any additional fee is due in connection with the present response, the Commissioner for Patents is hereby authorized to charge the requisite fee to our deposit account number 02-0393.

Favorable reconsideration is earnestly solicited.

Respectfully submitted,

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